Poems

Jno. A. Tucker

Yours very sincerely
Jas. A. Fulton

POEMS

BY

James Alexander Tucker, B.A.

With a Prefatory Memoir by
ARTHUR STRINGER

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Preface

THIS volume is the outcome of the wish of its author expressed shortly before his death. He desired the undersigned to publish his literary productions, if it were found advisable. He had partly completed a monody, entitled "A Heart's History," and had contributed to certain magazines and papers a large amount of verse of so high an order as to justify the expectation that later something even more worthy would be given to the world.

After his lamented decease consultation with friends and fellow-students revealed how welcome was the suggestion that his verse should be printed. The earnest hope was expressed on all sides that the poetic remains of so gentle yet so courageous a personality should be preserved. Some tribute to his life by college friends was also desired.

Apart from the worth of his productions it was finally decided that their publication in permanent form would prove the most appropriate memorial of the writer. His editors have, therefore, selected the contents of this volume from a considerable mass of MSS.

Besides this we shall have to content ourselves and readers with stating that Mr. Tucker was the author of much humorous "newspaper" verse, and some of a personal character, all of high order, which could not be included, though a number of the latter sort of poems have been printed as seemed to be required by the memorial nature of the book. His lighter verses reveal a side of his kindly, sincere nature not always found in his maturer and more sober lyrics. Hopefulness and joy in life were essential features of his every-day philosophy.

Permit us to say here that the many warm expressions of approval of this project received from all sides have materially aided its completion. So then, we have here gathered together, it is hoped, what we—the author's thousand lovers, friends, fellow-students and fellow-craftsmen—may best remember him by. His keen brain and sane habits of thought won him a wide circle of admirers; it is hoped that this publication may serve to widen and perpetuate the memory of one who was so distinctly an honor to our Canadian manhood. To him it is a tribute and a monument. If we, as Canadians, shall keep in mind his noble creed in "A Winter's Day in California" we shall help to confirm our poet's conviction as to the function of poetry expressed in "Shower and Song":

"A dreamer's songs fell fruitless,
The world brought forth no grain;
It was the field was barren,
The songs were potent rain."

There remains to acknowledge our indebtedness to Mr. Arthur Stringer for his admirable Memoir and sonnet, and to Miss Jean Graham for a poetic tribute written on the day of Mr. Tucker's death. We would also acknowledge, as sources of first publication of many poems, the *New England Magazine*, Toronto *Saturday Night*, *Youth's Companion*, *Canadian Magazine*, *The Week*, *Varsity*, *Sequoia* (Leland Stanford), *The Globe* and *The Mail and Empire*.

REUBEN BUTCHART.
JOSEPH T. CLARK.

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A Prefatory Memoir

BY ARTHUR STRINGER

James Alexander Tucker was born in Owen Sound, Ontario, on the 22nd day of December, 1872. He was descended of that sturdy pioneer stock through which, as may so often be seen in this Dominion of ours, a passionate love for outward freedom and largeness of material life is transfused into an equally passionate love of liberty for those less tangible things of the mind and spirit.

The bending of the twig, in even his earliest youth, showed clearly enough just how the ultimate tree of destiny was to be inclined. At the age of three, before he had so much as mastered the alphabet, he might be called a scribe, for once a week he issued to his family circle a newspaper made up of lines and dots and atavistic little drawings. This in time gave place to a carefully printed weekly, a compact sheet some five inches square, into which crept not infrequent echoes of the tears and laughter, the tiny comedies and the calamities, making up all childhood. This odd little sheet was tenaciously circulated among

friends and relatives for years; and during his subsequent school-days he was responsible for a number of more ambitious journalistic ventures, culminating, after his entrance into the Owen Sound Collegiate Institute, in the establishment of "*The Auditorium*," which, it is perhaps worthy of note, still remains the organ of the students' literary society in that institution.

Often in those lives predestined to be brief is crowded a compensating capability for continuous and feverish action. The life of James Alexander Tucker, like that of other poets who in the very April of their days bade farewell to the world, is still another instance of the operation of this tendency. He was a worker always, a joyous, indefatigable worker. With all the time and thought and care lavished on his adolescent journalism, he still succeeded in taking a high stand in his school work. When he was matriculated, with honors, from the Owen Sound Collegiate Institute, and became an undergraduate of the University of Toronto, the sphere of his literary activities widened, and an opportunity for sustained and more serious effort presented itself; but never did he allow the stress of his purely creative work, which was both a delight and a necessity to him, to interfere with his academic obligations.

Although, as a youth, he was touched with that

reticence and shyness which is both the evidence and the outcome of the more imaginative and sensitive nature, he had never allowed any shadow of this temperamental timidity to darken his ardent and resolute spirit. He was, indeed, the possessor of that higher and better courage which is born of the union of a delicate and painstaking scrupulosity with a keenly agressive and almost inflexible will. He was ever more of the Hamlet than the Laertes, gentle, lovable, loyal to the uttermost, with at times a touch of intellectual melancholy about him ; yet even to the end, when entering the very shadow of the Valley, a valiant and outspoken lover of life. To those of his friends who wandered from the straight and narrow path of faith he seemed surprisingly orthodox. For with all his vigor and inquisitiveness of mind, his natural bent was strongly conservative. His entire career, to me, always seemed strangely parallel with that of Arthur Hugh Clough—with the marked difference that where one went on questioning to the end, the other sought consolation in revealed faith and found strength in the religion of his fathers.

It was this seriousness of mind and strength of conviction, even above that indefinite and all-but-indescribable atmosphere of sweetness and light dwelling about the rapt young poet, which attracted to James Alexander Tucker the more serious minds of his university class.

Within the halls of every college, I take it, however materialistic or bacchanalian its outward tendency, there practically always exists a select coterie of finer undergraduate spirits, looking out on life more earnestly and more questioningly, more wistfully and more passionately seeking that inner and older truth which is not to be found in the class-books, draining from pure and congenial fellowship that rarer wine so often denied the noisier apostles of what I might call modern collegiate epicureanism.

It was our young poet's privilege to be the centre of such a coterie at the University of Toronto. Although neither avid of applause nor audacious of action, he was at once recognized as a leader of student life and thought, and readily and spontaneously those different honors at the disposal of his classmates were thrust upon him. His most significant and noteworthy election was that to the editorship of *'Varsity*, the long-established and jealously maintained weekly paper of the student body. It was while filling this position with such brilliant success that the young poet, with his passionate love of freedom, with his hatred of oppression, and his uncompromising ideality, came into collision with constituted authority.

It is a decade now since James Alexander Tucker fought his courageously determined fight for liberty of undergraduate speech and activity. It would be needless and out of place here to enlarge on his sus-

tained and self-sacrificing opposition to authority tyrannically exercised. Momentous as the episode seemed to the student-body, which joined in open and unanimous revolt against those powers which oppressed them, the movement which Mr. Tucker headed is here worthy of consideration more as an evidence of one unselfish man's heroic and disinterested devotion to Abstract Right, and as a token of that scrupulous allegiance to a just cause, however hopeless and forlorn, which marks the strong mind as the leader of the weak. It is, at best, a sad and painful chapter in the history of those halls which so many of us love, or have loved. It is a sad and painful chapter,—and yet it is far from being a record of defeat. For out of the ashes of such failures rises the more triumphant and the more enduring victory.

"Two only in God's universe—
Two wretched beings, hateful base!—
The Stars have power to grind and curse,
The Years have warrant to disgrace:—
He who in hate shouts 'Crucify!'
And he who, knowing well the Right,
Stands by, nor draws his sword to fight,
Because his vile heart fears to die."

It is true that the young poet left the walls that should have been proud to shield him, preferring expulsion to the sacrifice of a righteous conviction. But his going was of such a character that his migration to Leland Stanford University partook, indeed, of the

nature of a justly won triumph,—not of the ignominy of a spiritual defeat. Even the college from which he went, as was the case after the expulsion of Shelley from Oxford, in time learned to regret, tacitly if not openly, the measures which the obduracy of offended dignity had prompted.

After Mr. Tucker's death, indeed, a number of his most vigorous professorial opponents wrote poignantly significant letters, expressing their personal admiration for the purity and strength of his character and the undeviating lofty disinterestedness of his conduct.

After being graduated from Leland Stanford University, James Alexander Tucker, who all through his busy collegiate career had supported himself with his pen, naturally enough turned to the profession of letters for a livelihood. Since he chose to remain in the land of his birth, scorning the wider scope and the noisier and readier recognition of the alien market, he at once identified himself with Canadian journalism. Here again, as during his earlier college course, his clearness of thought and firmness of conviction enabled him to leave a marked influence on even the the busy currents of public opinion. His scholarly and studious editorials were copiously quoted and copied; the different periodicals with which he was associated took on a personality and vigor all their own. Indeed, so successful and so engrossing did this journalistic work become that it remains a matter of regret that the leisured poet for a time stood in

danger of being lost in the busy writer of the day. Already, in the spring of the year 1899, he had married Etta B. Graham, of Owen Sound, the friend and playmate of his ardent boyhood days. It was a happy and enriching union, marked by the birth of one child, a daughter. But with its joys and solaces the newer order of things brought with it its newer preoccupations and responsibilities. His note of song became all too rare. Pure and lofty as was his verse in quality, grim circumstance sternly limited its quantity. The exactions of the newspaper office ordained that lyric-writing should become an avocation of leisure, and not a vocation of self-absorbing idleness.

Yet into this verse has flowered the essential spirit of the young poet as he was and as he lived—only, as Merck once said of Goethe, James Alexander Tucker always stood and always will remain greater than anything he wrote. He made life itself fully and deeply harmonious. He attuned existence to that timeless music which falls from the lips of Faith and Hope and Love.

Indescribably moving and tragic as were the circumstances of that last long illness to which in the end he was forced to bow—an illness, too, of such a nature that as the cruse of the body became frailer the flame of the mind grew stronger—there was no sign, from first to last, of muffled self-pity or attitudinizing. He accepted his fate silently and valiantly,

even on the day of his death finding much pleasure and consolation in a volume of Matthew Arnold's poetry, doubtless thinking of that Thyrsis for whom other minds had mourned. Yet with all this tenacious alertness of mind he had neither the vanity nor the inclination of the trained hand (to be seen even in a Robert Louis Stevenson) to toy with the dark folds of his adversity. Both his grief and his resignation seemed tighter-lipped than that of Stevenson. It was a stoic and studious calm, too deep for words and artistry.

And this the chosen few who knew and loved him wistfully remembered, and at least partly understood, when, on the twenty-second day of December, precisely thirty-two years after the date of his birth, all that was mortal returned to the dust whence it came, and those scattered songs which were but echoes from the fuller symphony of his perfect life, were left to the careless ears of a seemingly uncomprehending world. And yet he is not dead; nor will he altogether die. For, as once sang that master-spirit whom he so loved—

"He has outsoared the shadow of our night;
Envy and calumny, and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not and torture not again
. . . . . .
Peace, peace! he is not dead, he doth not sleep—
He hath awakened from the dream of life."

James Alexander Tucker

He fared, we said, out to some vast Alone,
A wandering soul, and knew no more his own,
As Earth knew not this strong man we had known,—

Forsaking all that life's weak hands had won,
Leaving the Dream unfound, the Deed undone,

He sought that Deep, beyond our harbour foam,
Where Loneliness and Silence are his home.

* * * * *

Ah, so it seemed,—yet there are times when we
Stand by his salt, companionable Sea

And strangely feel he fares amid his kin,
While we stand desolate in life's dark Inn,

And darkly view that outland Deep afar,
Where Aspiration knows its utter Star,
And he and God and careless Wisdom are!

—A. S.

To his Memory.

JAMES A. TUCKER.

He met the sunshine of life's day
With open brow;
Hours gold or leaden gray
Are over now.

He looked through weary hours of pain
Not down but up;
Thus, unafraid, could drain
The bitter cup.

So true to friendship's strong demand,
So free from guile,
He gave e'en Death his hand
With trustful smile.

Though all too soon in wintry gold
His sun went down,
Ne'er braver knight of old
Won wreath or crown.

—J. G.

December 19th, 1903.

Three blissful days, when love, like sun
Upon the sea, or cloud above
The long-parched fields, made two in one
And swathed them in the bliss of love!

Three bursting days, three days of dream,
Of fire, of dream, of fire again!
Three days of cares that did but seem,
Of joys that would not question "When?"

Three brief, long days — days brief in sum
But long in all the love they spelled;
Days when eternal time to come
Was dross to that one hour we held.

Ah, days so blissful, bursting, brief!
Ah, days so calm, yet full of fire!
Here in my heart — a vacant grief,
And hands — the aches of desire!

J.A.T.

Oct. 26/99.

Poems

A Winter's Day in California.

(Santa Clara Valley)

This afternoon upon the hills
  The winter sun rests strangely sweet;
  The valley, dreaming at their feet,
With murm'rous music thrills.

Music of zephyrs in the palms,
  And scented eucalyptus trees;
  And chattering of shrill killdees
Round distant reedy dams;

And where the pine's dark flag unfurls,
  And blood-red holly-berries shine,
  And bay and chaparral intertwine,
The chirruping of squirrels.

Far off, the mountains, lapped in haze,
  High-throned—like hoary kings of old,
  Girt in their purple and their gold—
Look forth with lofty gaze;—

Forth o'er dominions rich in stores
  Of corn and oil, and gold and wine,
  And flocks of sheep and herds of kine,
Clasped round by shining shores.

But sitting at the casement here,
  Where swims the tremulous rich delight
  Of slumb'rous sound and smell and sight,
This last day of the year :—

What son of Canada could forget,
  'Mid all the sensuous charm and glow,
  That frugal land of sun and snow
That holds his heart-strings yet?

That land where first he heard the song
  Of Robin Redbreast on the tree,
  When the late grass sprang tenderly
And days were waxing long;

That land of river, forest, rock,—
  Stern country! hallow'd by the tears
  And toils of simple pioneers,
The blood of Wolfe and Brock!

No, 'mid this lavish, rare display
  Of Nature's bounties, rich and free,
  My heart, dear country, turns to thee
In love this winter's day;

And would not give one foot of thy
  Rude soil, one white December blast,
  For all these valleys, verdant, vast,
For all this languid sky!

These make not nations; only hearts
  Strong as the basal rocks, and pure
  As limpid northern streams, endure
When all else sinks and parts.

And such may flourish where the year
  Is chill, and Nature's iron hand
  Rules sternly o'er the sluggish land,—
As vigorously as here:—

Yea, more; for strength is born of toil,—
In bitter sweat man eats his bread;
And where the sweets too thick are spread
The virtues rot and spoil.

O Canada, think not thy creed
Must rest on cities, factories, gold;
If rich in men of liberal mould
Thou hast no further need.

Pray, therefore, for true men and strong—
Men who would dare to die for right,
Who love and court God's searching light
Because they shield no wrong.

December 31st, 1895.

To Canada.

Unlike all leaves or stout or slender,
All flowers kiss'd by summer's breath—
Which die in shame—the Maple's splendor
Is greatest in her hour of death.

Dear country, should occasion call
Thy sons to die in Freedom's strife,
Like thine own maple emblem fall,
More glorious ev'n in death than life.

Lundy's Lane.

(Suggested by the burial, October 17th, 1891, of the remains of some of the British forces who fought in this memorable battle.)

Three-quarters of a century
  Have passed away like snow
Since Drummond and Riall stood firm
  And fought the furious foe;
When round our gallant fellows
  The bullets hissed like rain,
And heaped with dead and dying men
  The field of Lundy's Lane.

The twilight of the summer eve
  Was hovering in the sky,
When rose upon the listening air
  The British battle-cry;
Then through the trembling heavens surged
  The roar of giant strife,

For thrice two thousand armed men
Were battling there for life.
Yet still above that fearful din
Of battle's mad career
Was heard from throbbing British throats
The British battle cheer.

All through that night till midnight's hour
Was on Time's trembling lip,
Our gallant fellows at the cup
Of bitter death did sip.
They cared not if each moment drained
The drops of faltering life,
They fought for home and native land,
For mother, child, and wife.
Not theirs the fight for conquest,
Not theirs the fight for gold,
But theirs the fight for freedom's right
Their fathers gained of old.
Thus with stern hearts and steady hands
They marched into the fray,
And there our bloodiest battle
Was fought and won that day.
Bloodiest!—aye, six thousand men
At dusk stood on the field—
Two thousand dead or dying fell
Before the day was sealed.

Yes, o'er their grave let banners wave,
Let trumpets moan their funeral note ;
God in His might looked down that night—
Looked, and the wrong he smote.
They fought for home and native land,
For mother, child, and wife,
And recked not if each moment drained
The dregs of faltering life.
They fought for home and native land,
They held the foe at bay ;
They fell, but though they fell, they stand
In honor's ranks to-day.
They gave their blood to save their flag,
To keep their land from shame ;
To God be praise for victory,
To them eternal fame!

And though we hope that ne'er again
Such strife may shake our land,
But pray these sister nations may
Give each a friendly hand;
Yet while one drop of British blood
Swells a Canadian vein,
Our hearts must thrill when we recall
The fight of Lundy's Lane.

Shower and Song.

The summer showers are falling
  Out on the furrow'd main ;
But ocean's fields are barren,—
  The showers fall in vain.

A dreamer's songs fell fruitless,
  The world brought forth no grain ;
It was the field was barren,
  The songs were potent rain.

Poet and Rhymester.

Him not a poet do I count who blows
His pipes with never so bewitching skill,
If 'neath the storm of sound there doth not thrill
A purer charm that finds no swift repose,
But in the soul's deep channels sweetly flows
After the song itself hath died away—
As April vanisht yields the bloom of May,
Or deepening perfumes haunt the long-dead rose.

A brazen fraud, though fools his praises roar ;
Juggler with words and mountebank of rhyme,
He soothes the ear, but cannot touch the heart—
Giving it measures subtle and sweet in art,
But voiceless of the mighty note of Time,—
Musician less, and vain, coarse minstrel more.

Scythe Song.

Through shudd'ring fields of yellow wheat
That would but cannot make retreat,
Accurst of every blade and ear,
I sway and swing afar, anear!
And as I sweep my swath along,
I murmur forth a soothing song:

"Hush, ah, hush! and cease to weep,
I bear no sorrow, I give you sleep;
Life is a toilsome, painful breath—
I come with balm, I give you death.
To-day is sighing, to-day is sorrow,
Behold, ye sleep in peace to-morrow.
Hush, then, hush, and cease to weep,
I heal your sorrows, I give you sleep."

Amid the haunts of men I pass,
To me they are as ripen'd grass;
They fall before me day by day,
Not one can brave me in my way.
Yet, curst and fear'd as earth's worst foe,
I scatter blessings as I go.

"So hush, be silent, cease to weep,
I bear no sorrow, I give you sleep;
Life is a toilsome, painful breath—
I bring you healing, I give you death.
To-day is sighing, to-day is sorrow,
Behold, ye rest, ye rest to-morrow.
Hush, ah, hush, then, and cease to weep,
I heal your sorrows, I give you sleep."

My harvest is to come. Ye hear
My song already in your ear,
Drawing ever anear, anear!
From Russian steppe and Persian plain
Through sickening cities, mount to main,
I sweep—before the ripen'd blade,
Behind in heaps the harvest laid.
Like shudd'ring fields of waiting wheat,
Ye would but cannot make retreat.
"Then hush, ah, hush! and cease to weep,
I bear no sorrow, I give you sleep;
Life is a toilsome, painful breath—
Behold, I come with the balm of death.
To-day ye sigh and to-day ye sorrow,
But ye sleep, ye sleep in peace to-morrow.
Hush, then, hush, and cease to weep,
I heal your sorrows, I give you sleep."

The Premonition.

Sick! sometimes a horrid spectre passes
Before my eyes and whispers in my ear
Words of the grave, and walks with me abroad
When I would fain commune with other things.
O God, save me! Death, death, how I hate her!
I shudder to think of her blood-stained lips.—
Take her away if but for a little while,
And let this sickness pass and this poor frame,
Which I have loved and still do love, O God!—
Deeming it not a sin to love it so—
Escape this nightmare-fury's talon hands.
I would not trust myself with her for worlds!
For though she tries to whisper honeyed things
For my seduction, on her lips are blood!—
She cannot hide the marks nor wipe them off;—
And frightful finger-nails, that, if they clutched
Round a man's throat, would tear the bursting veins,
Hang from her lean blue fingers. O God, save
If but a little while this poor weak frame,
And let this sickness pass, for Jesus' sake!

The Betrothal.

'Tis cold to-night; the room is chill,
And, oh, the wind is wild!
I have not heard it half so shrill
Since I was but a child,
And used to start awake and hear
Its shudder 'neath the rattling pane,
And lie wild-eyed and cold with fear
Between the gusts of rain.

Draw close the curtain, nurse—ah, there! . . .
Hark! was that only ten?
How long the restless nights drag out
The pangs of dying men! . . .
I hate this hard, lone bed. . . . The wind
Blows every night so strong
I cannot sleep; but God be praised!
It cannot now last long.

I did not sleep last night, and, nurse,
I saw her—did you see?—
My new love, that strange, noiseless form,
Come in and look at me!
I know her face right well, nurse,
But as I watched her there,
Methought there ne'er was mortal maid
One-half so sweet and fair.

Who was she, nurse? I love her!
Her luminous eyes did pierce
So swift, so keen, into my heart,
I thought them almost fierce.
And she was lithe and beautiful,
So fair I held my breath—
I knew she must be my new love,
The fair-haired, red-lipped Death.

I'll try to sleep now, but the wind
Is whistling very wild,
Just as it used to long ago
When I was but a child.
It makes me think of other times
I loathe to think of now,—
Before I close my eyes, dear nurse,
Smooth my hair back from my brow.

Weary.

I ask, O Father, not to live again
When I have drunk this poor heart full with pain ;
Short though life be, it is enough to know
The dregs of pleasure and the lees of woe.

Unlike the slaves of Sense, who shudd'ring think
Joy hath its bound if being hath its brink,
To me this thought would be the doom of peace,—
Chain'd to eternal life without release.

So when this thirsty cup is drain'd complete,
Give me to dash the vessel at my feet ;
And seal Thou on my lips the boon thrice blest
The sweet oblivion of eternal rest.

Cold as the deep, undug, insensate clay,
Dark as sea-depths unreach'd by dimmest day,
Smite me with death, O God, and let me lie
Blind unto suns that wane and moons that die.

Life's Slaves and its Masters.

How sad to stand before the past
  And knock upon its echoing door,
And try the lock and find it fast—
  To open for thee nevermore!

How sad to know one more tale told,
  One vase more broken at the well;
A beacon quenched, a heart turned cold,
  A world stripped of its old-time spell!

Happy the few who walk serene
  Amid such wreck of outward things,
And turn untroubled from the scene
  To quaff from cool, secluded springs:—

Springs that within themselves arise,
  By time unemptied as unfed!
Kings are these mortals, tranquil, wise,
  Self-poised—the leaders, not the led!

But we—the many—we are bound
By the gross world in which we fret;
Nor do the suns for us bring round
Power to renounce, forsake, forget.

Like untried mariners we steer
By lights that show a storm-washed lee,
Dreading to leave the land and veer
Out to the unmarked, open sea!

Secrets.

If in each human countenance
  The soul's life were laid bare,
Those whom we envy now perchance
  Might their own pity share.

Knowing the joy, grief, yearning, fear,
  Deep-hidden in each breast,
To no man would his lot appear
  As either worst or best.

Doubt.

Ah, sad and dark sometimes the day,
And fierce the pain that eats the heart;
Our fairest flowers fade away,
Our dearest hopes depart.
Oh, burning fear! oh, hideous dread!
What if this dark, contracting ball
Hold all the past, hold all the dead?
What if these years be all?

Sad, then, is love, hopeless is pain,
Wildly fantastic human-kind,
As shapes that flit across the brain
Of one from childhood blind!
And what is laughter, what is wine,
And song and dance, and kiss and jest,
Save tears of thrice-embittered brine,
And mockery at best?

Ah, if our flesh is all ; if years
  Quench all the suns in turn, and pass
Across the firmament of spheres
  Like breath upon a glass ;
Then, O my heart, cease thou to beat,
  Clot the red flood and end the strife !—
If life is but of hands and feet,
  How cruel a jest is life !

On the Moor.

As one who wanders on a moor at night
Seeking the house-light that shall guide him home,
Till, blinded by the darkness beating down
From the unmoving vault o'er all the earth,
He sees a hundred false, imagined lights
One after another, and the way is lost,—
The true light mingled with the false so that
He knows not which be true and which be false,
But weary falls asleep in deep despair,
And lies till morning wakes and shows to him
The great unquenchèd light which shines o'er all
And close at hand the home he sought by night,
Yet seeking fail'd to find: even so the soul,
Benighted here, wanders in search of truth,
Confus'd by will-o'-the-wisps, and shall not know
Which light be true, which light be false, until
The future morn of God break through the night,
Showing the haven of the soul at hand.

Caprice and Law.

The inconstant winds that rout the waves
  And shake the forest wide
Seem shouting, "Foolish mortal, cast
  Earth's tedious rules aside!"

The stars that calmly tread their course—
  The same that Moses saw—
Trace on the skies a surer word,
  "Conform thy life to law!"

The Unexpressed.

Listless, to lie and dream,
While far above in sleep-dimm'd boughs is heard
The singing of the bird :
To dream that all are dead beneath the sky,
Save only the dear singing birds and I !—
All strife, discordant sound, buried in deep surcease ;
And beauties born of peace
To bloom and multiply ;
Then without any care,
The whole world mine alone,
From all soft sounds of air,
From waves more sweet-voiced grown ;
At last perhaps I should,
In that sad solitude,
Learn how to sing that song
Which, throbbing in me long,

Still murmurs in my breast.
Alas! so unexpressed—
That something in the heart
Of every mortal man,
Towards which all song and art
Have reached since art began.
And ah! with that expressed
In words of awful flame,
God should the highest honor give,
Saying, "Aweary one, now cease to live;
Die and forget all things; joy not, nor grieve;
Sleep, sleep, dear child, in my immortal name."

Retribution.

When I consider what I might have been
And what I am—so poor, so frail, so low;
Picturing promised lands I may not reach,
Dreaming of powers I cannot hope to know:

Fain would I loose, with these weak, helpless hands,
The cords in ignorance and folly spun,—
Fast knotted skeins of misspent yesterdays
That round my feet in hopeless meshes run.

Ah, we indeed do mount on our dead selves!
The Past's white hand still points our future way;
To weep before the Fates avails us naught,
We can but tread the path as best we may.

Yesterday's follies limit our to-days:
The gods keep tally—beat against thy bars;
Strive to undo thy past; look up and see
The fix'd, inexorable pathways of the stars!

Joy in Sorrow.

The dull November days are here,
Days of wan skies and landscapes drear,
When through the forest far and near
Is heard the squirrel chattering clear,
    The partridge drumming low;
When all throughout the faded land,
Like alms from some swift, scornful hand
Toss'd to a wretched beggar band,
    The gold leaves downward blow.

Anon when moons are pale on high,
Encircled in a watery sky,
Is heard the loon's last lonely cry
From shores where silent shadows lie
    Dark-dyed in depths below;
And ever through the restless night,
Afar to left and far to right,
Like some unclean and cursed sprite,
    The owl flits to and fro.

But though the world is gray and lone,
The song-birds and the flowers flown ;
Though on each writhing wind is blown
The dirge of summer overthrown,
Man is not wholly bowed.
From some unguessed, unfathom'd spell,
He feels a joy he cannot tell ;
Oh, in the wild night it is well
One star is still allowed !

Thus, when our heads are bended low,
And Death, the tyrant, smites with woe,
Our souls may catch some mystic glow
To light the dismal way ; for though
We never quite may tell
Whence comes it to the bruisèd heart,
Its balm and healing to impart,
Yet always with the pang, the smart,
There cometh peace as well.

A Sudden Silence Fell.

As through the mapled land I passed
A sudden silence fell ;
I heard the birds no longer sing,
Nor any little living thing
Its plaintive story tell.

All mutely moved the chanting wind
Among the branches high ;
I held my breath, I dared not speak,
I felt that even a whisper weak
Would burst the brittle sky.

Thus a soul wandering through the world
Meets death some close of day :
A moment's silence and 'tis past ;
Once more he hears life's living blast
As he resumes his way.

Life's Shaping Moments.

How strange the heart's successive pains and pleasures!
How blind man's journey thro' an unknown world!
Each day so different from its predecessors—
Old flowers faded and new blooms unfurled.

How could'st thou twelve months gone have dreamed the story
That gives a meaning now to all thy years?
Could Autumn's rose-roots prophesy June's glory?
Could Summer's sky be capable of tears?

Things we deemed greatest, looked at from the distance,
Have oft had little bearing on life's course;
The trivial (as we judge), with strange insistence,
Doth tinge the years with gladness or remorse.

Forward we press, towards some enchanted
bower
That beckons us to come and taste its shade,
And lo! beside our path a little flower,
Unlooked for, makes the farther vision fade.

To yonder great man came life's wished-for
honor,
Which neither helped nor stayed him from
his goal,
But in the throng that night he gazed upon her,
And that one glance made history for his
soul!

At Midnight.

Yon steady stars that splendrous glow
  Through all the lonely night,
Shone countless centuries ago
  With just as full a light.

The hopes and love that shed their peace
  Upon the soul's dim way—
They gleamed in Egypt, Persia, Greece,
  Just as they gleam to-day.

Night follows night, years come and go;
  Creeds pass with meteor flame;
But high, serene, the stars still glow—
  Man's heart is e'er the same.

Philip.

I.

CHARLES.

Alas for the days when our lives were young
And our hearts throbb'd wild and free!
And alas for the hopes that our young hearts held,
And alas for the dreams so soon dispell'd
In the days that used to be!
For now through the mist of the bygone years
There often is borne to me
A sadness that savors of strife and fears,
Like brine blown far from the tides of tears
That swell on life's lonely sea.
Oh, my heart is sore and my soul is sad,
And ever I dream and anon
Of the days when we plann'd and the days when we built,
And fashioned of clay to gloss over with gilt,
And thought to get bread from stone.

Oh, why was it then that our eyes were blind
  As the mole that burroweth deep?
Why thought we the poles of the skies to find,
  While we grovell'd with things that creep?
And when I look back o'er the long-gone days
  Of our lost and wasted youth,
I sigh and my heart, aweary, asks,
  "Oh, where shall the soul find truth?
For Nature herself but utters a lie
When she quickens the heart and brightens the
    eye,
And lifts the heavy, the hopeless sigh
  From the voice of human breath;
For in her smile is a ghastly wile,
  And even in life is death:—
A lingering death is every life,
And every peace is a smouldering strife!"

So we thought, old friend, to solve in time
  The wonder and end of man;
But we fail'd, dear Phil, we utterly fail'd
  Before we even began.
We thought in our weakness to know all strength,
  But we reckon'd without our host;
For we were as worms in a giant's hand

As a builder that builds on the sliding sand
So that he and his house are lost.
But still old memories stay with us
To embitter our cup of woe,
And our dreams still come in the fever of night
To make our poor hearts glow—
To make them glow for a moment, then grow
Only the colder still—
A demonish spirit pursuing each dreamer,
Besieging the city until
It shatters and shakes, and batters and breaks,
The gates of his weakling will.

We fretted to know why man should exist,
And why the heavens were made;
And we would hold Nature here by the wrist
And for once see man obeyed;
And we would know the secret of life,
To be masters of earth and sky—
But, oh, we were weak for such giant strife,
And God, though afar, was still nigh.

Was it well, dear Phil, that we fail'd so sore?
Was it well that we ever began
To try to weigh the awful world
And to balance one God against man?

II.

PHILIP.

I sometimes think, dear Charles, that we,
  Though we "lost and wasted" our youth,
Have been better men than we should have been
  Had we never aspired to the truth.
Oh, tell me not that our dreams were vain,
  For I feel in my heart, and I know
That failure was given that we might gain ;
That clouds are sent that there might be rain,
And that bliss is hid in our woe.

And the world will go on with its million years,
  And the heavens will still go on ;
And our flesh may be dust and ashes and tears,
  And our hearts be as cold as stone ;
But the work of our youth shall have reached
    far forth,
  A jewel'd and sparkling span ;
And our failure, for us, have a golden worth
In bridging the gulf 'twixt heaven and earth,
  And linking the God with the man.

To a Discouraged Artist.

This life here is all incomplete—we see but an
arc of the ring.
Some day you will paint me great pictures,
some day you'll be able to sing
Songs that will shame Petrarca's, or carve from
the hard, white stone
The clean, soft curves of a Venus fair as
Praxiteles' own.

Why?

Because, friend, our own dumb bosoms feel
always at home with the best;
As the best rises, we rise with it—like bubbles
that climb the wave's crest;
We sit with the greatest as equals—we eat of
the high priest's food—
No temple so glorious, so holy, we are conscious
that we intrude!

Think you such heavenward impulse will not
work its ultimate will?
This life's but the upward slope—the next, or
the next, is the hill!
The hill from which Raffael and Shakespeare
looked out with calm sweep o'er the plain,
The hill they have left for a higher and the one
it is yours yet to gain.

Worship.

From the rushing rain, the rack
Of bare winter trees, the moan
Of the midnight wind, the crash
Of the breakers pouring back
Over boulders grim and black;
From the swirl of dead leaves blown
By the grisly gale, the cry
Of the bittern sweeping by
Lone beneath a rolling sky;
From the twittering of birds,
Pipe of throats 'neath sultry noon,
Dreamy low of distant herds,
And the mingled sounds that swoon
Into one soft melody
All the summer afternoon;
From the bud, the flower, the fruit,
Sand, and grass, and seed, and leaf,
Stalk and stone, and knot, and root,
Gather I all my belief.

Evr'y sound and every sight,
Ev'ry taste, and smell, and touch,
Teaches me a mystic law
I can know but ne'er define;
Shows me things I never saw
In great books, and tells me much
That I would give worlds to write—
Truths that leave, though unexprest,
Peace and faith within the breast.

Creeds and doctrines I forego,
But, here in the awful aisles
Of God's Universe—the vast
Temple where His musics flow
And His holy presence is—
Prostrate I myself full low
In my nothingness, adore
All the beauty, all the pow'r,
Majesty and purity
Of the God, the one great Am
Of all sense; and weakly cry
"Holy, holy, O Most High!"

The Conflict.

When with pain and bitter, restless grieving
Thou despairest of thy long'd-for goal,
Trembling for the issue, and believing
All the world is leagued against thy soul:

Inward turn thine eyes in deep reflection,
Cleans'd from grime of battle, dust of mart,
Thou shalt find within the true defection,
See the real conflict in thy heart.

'Tis not outward things that taunt and mock thee,
All the world must help thy soul to win;
But yon legion'd enemies that daunt thee
Are the spectres of thy faults within.

Ode.

Written for the laying of the corner-stone of Owen Sound Marine and General Hospital, June 16th, 1892.

We gather here, Almighty Lord,
With rule and level, trowel and square ;
Oh, unto us Thy skill afford,
And for this rite our hearts prepare.

As here this corner-stone is laid,
Grant that our work be true and strong ;
Let all these walls be firmly made,
And may they stand unmouldered long.

And not alone these walls, O Lord,
But deep within our breasts to-day,
With proper rite and solemn word,
The corner-stone of kindness lay.

Here may the sick find tend'rest care,
Prompted by Love and Charity ;
And all the holy mysteries share
That willing craftsmen learn from Thee.

Persecuted and Persecutors.

In visions I behold the throng
  Of glad, pure souls who thro' the years
Have battled armed and sceptred wrong
  And quaffed its futile cup of tears ;—
A mighty host, outstretching wide
  Across the ages, robed in peace ;
  No power may bid their song to cease—
Transfigured, crowned and glorified.

Think not they suffer who endure
  The scourge, the rack, the martyr's cross ;
If lips be true and hearts be pure,
  They know no evil, dread no loss.
Not theirs the agony when the fires
  Roll livid round their crackling bones ;
  The voice that through yon body groans
Comes from the Evil that expires.

Proof against ill, the hosts of Hell,
  Though hand join hand, may harm them not;
The earth may quake, the floods may swell,
  God knows his own—he marks their lot.
And in the tempest's dreadful hour,
  They catch, where grosser ears must fail,
  High o'er the weeping and the wail,
Strange songs of victory and power.

Two only in God's universe—
  Two wretched beings, hateful, base!—
The stars have power to grind and curse,
  The years have warrant to disgrace:—
He who in hate shouts, "Crucify!"
  And he who, knowing well the Right,
  Stands by, nor draws his sword to fight,
Because his vile heart fears to die.

The Cloud.

Forget? Can I forget that August night
'Neath the veranda low that clings
Round the old house, where clustering creeper swings,
Wind-stirr'd 'gainst walls of white?
Far o'er the tree-tops and the eastern swell
Dim flush'd the twilight's dawn,
A cricket piped along, and sweetly fell
The moonlight on the lawn.

Your words were few—they ofttimes are; but low
And soft they fell upon a life
Jangl'd with pain, and swept the half-hush'd strife
Into their tuneful flow.
Music without, and music in the soul,

Uncertain, sad and wan,
But strange and sweet, as the dim light that stole
O'er all the breeze-swept lawn.

There came a thick cloud on the moon, and we
Grew silent as we sat there, I and you;
While my heart, trembling, ask'd if your heart knew
The thought that pass'd o'er me;
Since in that cloud I saw the deeper night
Which even then across my sky had drawn,
And swept away life's promise, as the light
That vanish'd from the lawn.

Song.

Once, in a purple twilight,
  Long and long ago,
I stood outside your window,
  Where the roses bend and blow,
And heard you sing a love-song,
  Tender and sweet and free,—
But I did not dream that in singing
  You were thinking of me, of me!

And in that purple twilight
  My heart was overcome
By the song's breath, and I loved you,—
  But my tongue was dry and dumb;
For you were a high-born lady,
  And what could an artist be?
So I stole away, not knowing
  You were singing of me, of me!

Since then, in a far-off country,
When the evening sky was pale,
A nightingale at the casement
Told me the whole sad tale.
You are dead, and my heart is broken,—
But ah! this might not be
Had I only known in the twilight
You were singing of me, of me!

A Song of Friendship.

Others may say that thou art false,
  But we have been together
Full many a year in wild and drear,
  Or bright and bounteous weather;
And they may try with sland'rous lie
  To pierce our friendship thro'—
Their brands shall shiver in their hands,
  I know that thou art true!

Have I not shared thy cup of gall?
  And hast thou not shared mine?
Have we not drunk together all—
  If it were gall or wine?
Ah, when the tear was on my cheek,
  The mist was in thine eye!
Yes, they may say whate'er they may—
  They know thee not as I.

Can I forget that autumn day,
  Before a priestly tree,
All in the dim cathedral woods,
  I pledg'd my heart to thee?
We clasp our hands—the breeze above
  A new psalm upward sends,
And every branch and twig and leaf
  Seems chanting "They are friends!"

Since then, whate'er belonged to me,
  For good or ill, was thine;
And flowers that bloom'd along thy path
  Threw their sweet scents on mine!
Then let the world united try
  To pierce our friendship through;
Their brands shall perish in their hands,—
  I know that thou art true!

Love's Interpretations.

I.

O Love, to-night I thought of thee
Beneath the whisp'ring maple tree,
When stars were rising in the dusk,
And birds had gone to rest!

A gentle zephyr fanned my face—
In it I felt thy glad embrace,
The soothing touch of thy dear lips
I dream has blessed my brow.

And faint aloof the branches sung—
In them I heard thy tuneful tongue
Wafting a mystic melody
Across the moon-lit wave.

The grasses, too, were sighing sweet—
O Love, 'twas like thy gliding feet
Making a song upon the mede
When I have walked with thee.

From swaying cedars faintly fell
A scent more soft than honey-bell;
And oh! I thought of thy dear breath
Upon my face at night.

O Love, to-night I thought of thee
Beneath the whisp'ring maple tree,
When stars were rising in the dusk,
And birds had gone to rest!

II.

The brook beneath my lattice flowing,
How sweet it chatters all the day,
And sings and sings, and will but say,
"Love, love, love, shall live alway!
I hurry on, I must not stay,
The sea awaits me far away,
And to the sea I'm going!"

And through the nights, all richly glowing
Beneath the red moon's opiate beams,
Though sweet sleep lull my soul, it seems
The song is ever in my dreams—
"I am the brook that glints and gleams,
And to the sea I'm going!"

Then, when the golden morn is showing
The lurid forms that haunt the day,
Waking, I hear the water say,
"Love, love, love, shall live alway!
I hurry on, I must not stay,
The sea awaits me far away,
And to the sea I'm going!"

The First Letter.

Oh, if she guessed I had a heart,
  How could she better win it
Than by a dainty letter and
  A pansy hid within it?

I've read it twice, I've read it thrice,
  And kissed the pansy in it;
But ah, 'tis hard to learn by rote—
  I must again begin it.

Oh, if she knows I have a heart,
  How could she better win it
Than have me break a dainty note
  And find a pansy in it?

Flesh and Blood.

I have seen her on the street,
  She passed full stately by—
A dream of white in the shimmering heat,
  A dream, a breath, a sigh!
O heart, was it flesh and blood,
  With the swift and noiseless feet,
(Soft on her bosom a damask bud!)
  And the bearing proud and sweet?

I knew, I knew at last
  She would come from the land of dreams,
Out into my world from the yearning past,
  Out into the day's bright beams.
O heart, was it flesh and blood
  That fled so ghost-like past?
(Upon her bosom the damask bud!)
  Was it she, at last, at last?

Will she come again, again,
  And pass so stately by?
Or back has she gone from the gaze of men
  As she came—a vision, a sigh?
O heart, was it flesh and blood
  That trod the pavement then?
(Soft on her bosom a damask bud!)
  O heart, will she come, and when?

The Signal.

Set a lamp, love, in your casement,
When the weary day is done,
And the dreary night has fallen ;
It will be my star and sun !

I will answer with another ;—
Two lights flaming far apart,
Weaving with their rays a golden,
Unseen chain from heart to heart.

You will know my lamp's first beacon,
I will watch yours dimly shine—
Past the houses, fields and highways,
Ignorant of the far-flung sign.

Each will wait with throbbing bosom
For the signal to appear,
That will flash, however faintly,
My love there and your love here.

Three Days.

Three blissful days, when love, like sun
  Upon the sea or cloud above
The long-parched fields, made two in one,
  And swathed them in the bliss of love.

Three bursting days, three days of dream,
  Of fire, of dream, of fire again;
Three days of cares that did but seem,
  Of joys that would not question "When?"

Three brief, long days—days brief in sun
  But long in all the lore they spelled;
Days when eternal time to come
  Was dross to that one hour we held.

Ah, days so blissful, bursting, brief!
  Ah, days so calm, yet full of fire!
Here in my heart—a vacant grief,
  And hands—the ashes of desire.

Beloved, Draw Me Closer.

Beloved, draw me closer to thy breast!
The night is late, the moon sinks 'neath the hill;
Ev'n the impatient wind is lulled to rest,
And all the world is dark and sweetly still;
Save that the dying ground-swell yonder breaks
In slowly ebbing sobs along the beach,
Striving to bear from the great lonely lakes
The inexpressible something they would teach.

Beloved, draw me closer to thy breast!
To-night all nature seems to yearn for calm,
But I am filled with passionate unrest
And longing to be other than I am.
Surely I, too, like all things else, may find
Sometimes an hour—one hour—of utter peace,
Drive the world's sordid phantoms from my mind,
And quaff unvexed the joy of such release.

Beloved, draw me closer to thy breast!
Here, heart to heart, and clinging hand to hand,
Beneath thine eyes' soft glow I find that rest,
And all that peace can mean I understand.—
How deep the hush is! Ev'n the surf grows faint
To-night in this old garden. It is well;
I would not that its yearning, low complaint
Should stir the thoughts that I have come to quell.

Beloved, draw me closer to thy breast!
Here would I linger, here my whole heart give
Into thy gentle keeping; soothed, caressed,
I feel and know how good it is to live.
Let me be quiet, let me only hear
Those magic tones that tremble with their bliss,
Let me but feel thy warm, sweet presence near,
And pour my soul out in one rapturous kiss.

A Parting.

Only a press of the hand—
  This, and only this!
And a broken "Good-bye" in the gloom
  From lips that dare not kiss.

Then on through the dark and the wind
  That laughs at its own black jest—
On—on, with an emptier heart,
  To a hungry, troubled rest.

To One Beloved.

Dearest, if oft I grieve thee and offend,
Believe me, 'tis because I love thee so,
Whose slightest look or word hath power to sow
Deep in my heart the seeds of joy or pain.
These, sending down their roots, do cruelly rend
Or sweetly permeate my soul; attain
Unto its very depths; wondrously grow,
And bear their instant fruit of tares or grain.

Therefore, when I do grieve thee, pray forgive
What seemeth, mayhap, perverse jealousy,
Fierce petulance, or cruelty's studied art;
These are the tares. Impute not blame to me.
Consider but nor tares nor grain could live
Did their seed fall in an indifferent heart.

Separation.

So strange to think this mid-day sun
  Lights not the azure of thine eyes,
And will not till my day is done,
  And darkness o'er yon hills arise.

So strange that while this summer day
  Stirs all my being with delight,
Thy fainting pulses ebb away
  Beneath the dull Italian night!

So strange that thou and I, who love—
  And long have loved—the self-same air,
Woods, waters, hills and skies above,
  A common world no longer share.

But thou in a far distant land
  Sojournest till the year be run,
And wide between our hearts expand
  Dim wastes of mountain, wave and sun.

And thou canst gaze on dome and spire,
Where kings and popes looked long ago ;
While I of these rude landscapes tire,
Where rests no grave historic glow.

Yet, if one loving thought invade
Thy heart from mine, what signify
Oceans that shrink and hills that fade,
And circling suns that hurry by ?

Lost at Sea.

I house here with a shadow,
A rift of sun and sea ;
Her heart is like an angel's,
And oh, she loveth me.
As I was homeward sailing,
I glanced down in the sea,
And there I saw this maiden
So beautiful and free.

" Oh, come to me, sweet maiden,"
I cried, as down I gazed ;
And when she heard me calling,
Her lovely face she raised.
" Oh, I am but a mermaid,"
She sang, as down I gazed,
" And 'tis not meet a mermaid
Should by a man be praised ! "

"Yet come to me, dear maiden,"
I cried again, more bold,
"That I may kiss you, maiden,
Caress your locks of gold."
"You would not love me wholly—
You have some love of old,"
She sighed, "and I should only pine
And you would only scold."

"Alas, alas! fair maiden,
If you'll not come to me,
Then I must come to you, love,
Down in the cold, cold sea;
For since I love you, maiden,
And you'll not loving be,
My heart, if I should leave you,
Were buried in the sea!"

So forth I plunged in sadness,
Down through the darkling wave,
Down till the world grew silent
And billows ceased to rave.
My mother thinks me lost at sea,
With not a hand to save;
But oh, I plunged to happiness,
Down through the darkling wave.

My mermaid loves me dearly,
And all the day, full bold,
I sport with her through caverns
Where sleep the hulks of old.
We wander through the valleys
That, spreading out, enfold
Vast fields of gems that glisten
More bright than glint of gold.

Through streets of crimson coral,
O'er hills of golden green,
We float and fan and flutter
And dive the rocks between.
We sport on spars of amethyst
And loll on sands all sheen;
And when the far gray sun dips down
We sleep 'mid seaweeds green.

I love my little mermaid,
Who lives down in the sea,—
I do not feel the scorching tears
That shower at home for me.
My mother thinks her boy was drowned,
But who would not, like me,
Plunge down to love and happiness
Deep in the diamond sea?

In a Garden in Winter.

Poor Flower, stricken by the frost,—
Stems black and withered, petals lost,
Leaves by the heartless tempest tost
And dashed upon the ground :—
Here in the sacred garden where
Thy sweetness fed the eager air,
When summer days and nights were fair,
And song-birds wooed the roses rare
With ecstasies of sound,—
Say, does remembrance haunt thee yet
Of those full hours that fleetly sped
'Mid beauty blown and fragrance shed ?
Or is thy past forever set,—
Its memory wholly fled ?

A maiden-bud who lingered here
When winds were soft and skies were clear,

And all the leafy shades were sweet
And tranquil 'neath the noon-day heat,
And gay with glorious bloom,
Like thee now lies despoiled and sere,
Poor Flower, and thy withered leaves
Rustle about her tomb.
Tell me, does any vision pass
Before her vaguely 'neath the grass
To warn her in the dark and cold?
Does any memory haunt her yet,
Deep in her narrow bed,
Of the glad, vocal summer days,
The starry nights, the flowery ways,
And that wild love of old?
Or is the past forever set
For her men mourn as dead?

A Fancy.

When the red hosts of the swift-riding morn
  Sweep through the glorious spaces of the sky,
With flash of banner and with blast of horn
  Proclaiming that the Great White King is nigh:
The Earth—a rich, rare beauty in the throng—
  With blush, and laugh, and gesture full of grace,
  Draws her soft veil of filmy gauze and lace,
And thrills him with a passion sudden, strong,
  By the devouring beauty of her face.

The Brook's Grief.

Hast heard the song I sing among
  The boulders black, the fallen trees,
The trembling sedge along the edge,
  Where stunted willows choke the breeze;

Where fern and snake-weed, dark and rank,
  Suck the black blood of last year's bloom;
And through the grasses, thick and dank,
  The slug trails bright across the gloom?

Beyond the sunbeams gently play,—
  I see them web the far, far sky;
But I, who hate the light of day,
  Swift and unheeding hurry by,

And pass again with grim delight
  Into the shadows deep and still—
There I can dream, far from the gleam,
  And nurse my sorrow as I will.

Men listen to my clam'rous voice,
And deem me but a blithesome thing,
Made but to chatter and rejoice,
And mock the robins as they sing.

These are light souls that never knew
Such pain as finds no earthly balm;
But they who know remorse and woe—
They see and hear me as I am.

They catch beneath the joyous plash
A fev'rish toss, a ceaseless moan;
And recognize, with darkening eyes,
A soul responsive to their own.

In the gray night, when all is still
Save that the hemlocks fret and toss
Because the wakeful whip-poor-will
Is noisy in his house of moss,—

Ah, then I wildly beat my shores,
My anguish breaks its bonds in twain;
Each tiny leaf shakes with my grief,
The sluggish rushes thrill with pain.

Yet never man may guess the woe
That floods my heart unto its fill ;
Nor is there joy that I may know,
Bound as I am to witness ill.

Dark with men's tears, my current sweeps
The tragic vales of life, and then
Is destined far in stormy deeps
To fill the mouths of drowning men.

Fate.

The north wind at sunset swept down from the sky,
And whistled in sail and shrouds and spar,
While madly over the harbour bar
The white-fanged waves went snarling by.
And far in the north, where clouds stood clear,
A white sail rose o'er the ocean's rim ;
And the crew rejoiced at the harbor near,
But the water-demons were chuckling grim.

When night had blown down from the northern sky,
On a hidden rock from the harbour far
The ship plunged hard, and her tallest spar
Sank where the bones of dead men lie.
When the sun rose glad in the crisp, cold air,
The gale was fled o'er the earth's brown rim ;
But the ship and the men lay sunken there,
And the water-demons were chuckling grim.

Deep in the waters and far in the sky,
Spirits man never dreamed of are;
They dash the waves on the harbour bar,
They toss the tempest from clouds on high.
And oft when we laugh and sing most fair
They're dancing in hellish whirls of hate;
They whistle, and death speeds down through air
And breathes. The Ancients called them
"Fate."

Wayside Flowers.

" Willst du immer weiter, schweifen ?
Sich das Gute liegt so nah."

Wilt thou never rest or tarry,
Never leave the dusty road,
Never cheat the cares that harry,
Never flee the fears that goad ?

Long the pathway lies behind thee,
What but blood to mark the way ?
Sobs that choke thee, tears that blind thee,
Are they sweeter day by day ?

Far and fearful still before thee
Reels the hard and broken track ;
Ne'er a rose-leaf to restore thee,
Skies that flame and sands that crack.

Ah, hard by thy pathway growing,
If thou would'st but hear the truth,
Sweetly are the blossoms blowing
Thou hast dreamed of from thy youth.

Unfulfilled thy longing lingers,
While their whole hearts strive to say
They are pining for thy fingers,
They are fainting by thy way.

Wilt thou ever onward ramble?
See! the flowers thou would'st greet,
While thou treadest rock and bramble,
Die unnoticed at thy feet.

Voyagers.

(A Class Poem of Class of '95, Toronto University.)

To you who must see many days,
  Whose life before you lies unrolled
Like some wide sea-way, swept by rays
  Of day-dawn sunlight, that unfold
    In part, in part obscure the scene—
Blue-dipt in dreamy, distant haze,
  O'er watery stretches, flecked with gold,
    And deep with shadowy slopes of green.

To you who thus look forth and scan
  Th' unknown yet hopeful ocean-plain
With strong exultings, such as ran
  In throbbing floods through every vein
    Of brave Columbus, when he steered
  Out to the great, unmeasured main,
And saw before him, dimly spread,
A world of mingled hope and dread :

To you must come the weary toil
And anxious hazards of the deep,
The days of mutiny and moil,
The fev'rish nights devoid of sleep.
However calm the morning seems,
Cheat not your hearts with golden dreams
Of gentle winds and sunny seas!
The soul that leaves the sheltered straits
And lifeless shallows, where his mates
Inanely pass their lives away
In idly-anchor'd argosies,
Must weather sterner things than these.

Fierce storms will drive him from his way,
And hateful calms will hold him bound,
And dank sargassos hem him round
Full many a tedious, restless day.
And oft, as if in very scorn,
Far isles will mock his hoping heart—
Far isles of cloud, that melt and part
With the first zephyr of the morn.
And men will wag their heads and warn
The searcher 'twill be ever so—
His sails and pennants empty show,
His toils but vain, his hopes forlorn!

O Mariner, undaunted, bold,
To doubt be deaf, to danger blind!
Such never could that soul o'erwhelm
That gave a new world to mankind.
All undeterr'd thy course still hold,—
Thy changeless needle pointing true,
Thy tireless hand upon the helm,
Thine eyes still bent across the blue.
And doubt not with some future morn,
Thy long and toilsome journey past,—
Like him who held doubt, dread in scorn,—
Thou, too, shalt reach the land at last.

To Pyrrha.

(Horace, Bk. I., Ode 5.)

Pyrrha, what beauteous boy bedecked with roses,
And dewed with liquid perfumes sweet and rare,
In the sweet cave to you his love discloses?
For whom do you array your golden hair?

Simple its charms; but he—alas!—how often
Must moan your broken troth, Fate's cruel doom,
And wondering stare on seas that ne'er will soften
From their wild rage beneath fierce Heaven's gloom!

He now enjoys as gold your soft caresses,
And dreams you still are faithful and still kind;
He knows not of the treachery of your kisses,
False as the fondling of the fickle wind.

Wretched are they who trust to thy wild motion!
But, thankful to the Ruler of the Brine,
I, who was wrecked upon this self-same ocean,
Have hung my dripping garments at his shrine.

The Fisher.

(From the German of Gœthe.)

The river swirled and eddied past.
A fisherman sat by it,—
Into the depths his gaze fix'd fast,
In dreamy mood and quiet.
And as he sat and as he stared
The waters cleaved before him;
And, dripping, from their depths appeared
A mermaid standing o'er him.

To him she sang and softly spake:
"Ah, with thy craft and slyness,
Why dost thou these poor fishes take
To die in scorching dryness?
But didst thou know how little fish
Live blessedly down yonder,
Straight wouldst thou plunge to perfect bliss,
Nor stay to gaze and ponder.

" The sun and moon, do they not lave
Their beauteous forms in ocean,
And rise transfigured from the wave
With ripple-scattering motion?
The deep sky, crystalled in the sea,
Does it not tempt thee ever?
Nor thy clear image call to thee
To plunge into the river?"

The river swirls, it eddies past,
His feet it now caresses;—
And at that touch his heart beats fast
As 'neath love's first wild kisses.
The mermaid sings—she speaks—her lips
Paint bright the depths before him:
Half draws she him, and half he slips,—
The eternal floods close o'er him.

Autumn Weather.

For days and days the silent sky
  Gave back no gleam of sun or star ;
  And gloom, unbroken near or far,
Grew heavy to the wistful eye.
The trees clung, crouching from the rain,
  On meadows cold and dank and gray ;
And through the splash'd and dripping pane
  We looked and sigh'd the hours away.
All day within the shadowy house
  We sat and read, and paced and sat ;
  No sound but purring of the cat
And scampering of rafter-mouse
Disturb'd our languor, save aloof
The steady patter on the roof,
Or sometimes, down the stony road,
The rumbling of a distant load.
And still it rain'd ! It splash'd and poured
  On all the landscape all the day,

And all the night the eave-trough roar'd
  And drumm'd, half-heard and far-away,
  Troubling our visions as we lay
  Still half asleep, expecting day.

Ah, we were weary! Such a rain!
  The long hours, hous'd 'neath brooding skies,
  To melancholy thoughts gave rise,
And longings full of strange dull pain.

But, oh, at last, a rising gale,
  And scattering clouds, with rifts of blue,
  And cold, keen sunlight flashing through,
To bring to earth a hopeful tale!
The night comes on with gleaming skies,
  And roof and eaves give forth no sound.
We slumber; and, with dawning, rise
To find a brittle sunlight lies
  On sparkling fields of frozen ground.

Our Regiment.

(*A Class Poem, Class of '96 Leland Stanford University.*)

"Ye who go forth in the glow of the morning,
Filled with the lust of the new-broken day,
Courage and faith your proud faces adorning,
Banners spread forward and plumes floating gay;

"How shall ye stand when the roll-call is taken,
After the smoke and the thunder are stilled—
Broken and scattered? or firm and unshaken?
Proud on the rampart? or prone on the field?"

So they will tempt us; but we—need we reason,
Hating to mark the discouraging glance?
Even to question the victory were treason;
Hark to the bugles! They sound the Advance!

Forward! the issue is in our own keeping;
We can be fearless, and noble, and true;
Armed for the foe, whether waking or sleeping;
Quick to perceive and courageous to do.

So when the last charge is sounded, and o'er us
Livid and doubtful the gath'ring night lowers,
Dead 'neath the ramparts or sweeping before us
Our banners to victory, no shame shall be ours!

Let us but tend the pure flame of devotion,
Keep uncorrupt the high purpose of youth,
Shun the mean taint of life's sordid commotion,
Dare make a stand unto death for the truth.

Thus, marching forth in the morn's golden glory,
Not all in vain shall our flag be unfurl'd;
Some noble deed we may add to man's story,
Some deep-cut mark we may leave on the world.

Where Apple Blossoms Blow.

The dear old spreading apple-trees
That in the sunshine gently blow,
And nod their heads to greet the breeze,
And kiss the turf where violets grow,
Have donn'd a wreath of ruddy snow.

All through the orchard, sheaves of light,
In dancing ricks of yellow, mass ;
Where berry blossoms, twinkling white,
Bow low to let the shadows pass,
Bow low and hide amid the grass.

And ever on the playful breeze
Rich petal clouds come floating down,
And flash among bewilder'd bees
Like crystal dust from fairy's crown,
Or clippings soft from eider-down.

The lusty robin feels a thrill
From all the beauty of the scene,
And flits to higher branches still,
Where no leaf-clusters intervene
Him and his red-breast spouse between.

And there, unto his charmèd mate,
He pours in passion's richest note
The love-waves of his soul elate ;
And sends a pulsing lay afloat
From out his throbbing crimson throat.

Bright insects, pois'd on gaudy wing,
Delighted, hover round and raise
Their shrilly-piping tones to sing,
While working out their circling maze,
Spontaneous notes of sweetest praise.

And all above, and all below,
When blossoms crown the apple-trees,
Seem bursting with delight, and throw
Their songs of joy on every breeze,
When blossoms crown the apple-trees.

Oh, that I could forever stray
Beneath the trees where violets grow,
Among the sweet, young, tender hay ;
And seeds of dreamland verdure sow
Where lovely apple blossoms blow !

To a Pen.

Write to the young and strong
  That Truth's cause now doth call them,
And they who fight in God's own name
  No harm shall e'er befall them.

Write to the warriors stern,
  Grown weary of contending,
Though many a desperate charge remain,
  Yet Error hath an ending.

And to the hoary chiefs
  Who've borne the battle's burden,
Write that in this great war they wage
  Their scars are their best guerdon.

But over those who fell,
  Too frail for such endeavor,
Write humbly: "These were overcome,
  But, mayhap, not forever."

The Watcher.

White, 'mid the shadows soft, she lay
Wreathed sweetly for her burial day ;
So calm, that they who came to gaze
For the last time upon her face
Felt, as they crossed the curtained room,
Where lilies shed their faint perfume
And dimly lit the sacred gloom,
More joy than pain to know at last
The bitter, long-drawn struggle past ;
And the soft pitying tears that fell
Were glad as those the angels shed
On drooping rose and asphodel
The morn the Lord rose from the dead ;—
Tears that a pensive soul might weep
While gazing out o'er Heaven's steep,
Knowing its trials forever o'er.

One sat beside the lovely dead,
And no moan made and no tear shed ;

'Twas she who, watching thus for years,
Had day by day shed all her tears
Till now her very heart was dry,
Her tongue too numbed with grief to sigh.
And as she gazed upon that face
In its pale outlines she could trace,
Though altered by disease and time,
Clearly the budding baby grace,—
So well remembered from the day
She first beheld those features sweet,
And felt within her bosom beat
The rapture of a mother's love.

A child came through the door and laid
Against her cheek its golden head,
And gazed down on the placid face,
Awed by the stillness of the place;
Then bent and kissed with trembling lips
The brow and folded finger tips,
And rose again and, frightened, fled:
It was the daughter of the dead.
But in the watcher's eyes there stirred
No tear, her lips gave forth no word;
For in her heart there sudden rose
The vision of a former day,
When she who now so lifeless lay

Had been a little girl at play.
At length came one so young and fair,
So gentle and so debonair,
She with the dead might nigh compare;
Sweet flowers she brought, and tears she shed,
And tender, trustful words she said
About the joy and peace they know
Who once for all have crossed the tide
With Christ their Saviour by their side.
But still the mother's thoughts went back
O'er memory's green and sunny track;
She gazed still on her precious dead,
And thought how swift the years had fled,
And marked how Lily, where she lay
Wreathed sweetly for the waiting clay,
Looked as she did her bridal day.

The Legend of the Elves.

'Twas said, in boyhood days, at night
The woodland elves went dancing,—
In many a round they swept the ground,
'Neath trees in moonlight glancing ;—
But when the sun played peek-a-boo
Above the hills at morning,
And stars crept under quilts of blue,
The fairies took the warning.
Then off to their dim haunts they hied,
With many a trip and flutter,
And there in darkness they'd abide
Till twilight winds would mutter ;
And whosoe'er would drink the dew
At morn on wood-flower glancing,
That night should have the power to view
The woodland elves a-dancing.

In manhood's days we're often told
  Of some entrancing treasure,—
The crown of fame, the key of gold,
  The gilded chain of pleasure,—
All to be had for tossing o'er
  Some small but mystic potion ;
But when we come to gulp it down
  The drop becomes an ocean.
And when we get the drinking through
  We find no wondrous pleasure,
Aught more than they who drink the dew
  See fairies dance in measure.
Like them we find ourselves forlorn,
  In a midnight forest parted,
To struggle lone, through bush and thorn,
  Back to the place we started.

The Saviour, the Woman, and the Scribes.

'Tis early morning's tranquil hour,
And high aloft, on roof and wall,
On dome and minaret and tower,
The shaft-like sunbeams glance and fall.

And through the streets, so calm and fair,
Where scarce a footfall sounds as yet,
Damp with the dews of night-long prayer,
The Lord returns from Olivet.

But not to rest, from tumult free,
Those fainting limbs, that wearied brow:
Wist ye not, then, that He must be
About His Father's business now?

So to the Temple, where the throng
Is wont to congregate to pray,
The dauntless Toiler wends along,
Divinely strengthened for the day.

"And all the people came to Him."
Ah, bitter mockery! These that then
Flocked at the mention of His name,
Are these—are these, indeed, the men

Who, on that maddest of all morns,
Here in His world, beneath His sky,
Made whips of cords and crowns of thorns,
And hissed in hatred, "Crucify"?

He sits and teaches them, and long
They hearken, silent, to His word;
But a commotion stirs the throng,
A murmuring of tongues is heard.

Catching the uproar in His place
He turns, and presently He sees
A wife, with pale and tear-stained face,
Dragged forth by Scribes and Pharisees.

"Rabbi, this woman here," they say,
(With far intent and cunning tact)
"Was in adultery found this day—
Yea, taken in the very act.

"Now, Moses teacheth in the Law
Such must be stoned; but say'st Thou so?"
Thus ever sought they for some flaw
In Him they hated as their foe.

But Jesus stooped, and with His hand,
As if He did not hear them, wrote
Upon the yellow, trampled sand,
Nor even their presence seemed to note.

But as they questioned still, at last
He lifted up His face again:
"He that is sinless, let him cast
The first stone at her." Stooping then,

Once more He wrote upon the sand,
While, guilt-convicted by His word,
One after one that bigot band
Passed from the presence of the Lord.

Then Jesus raised His eyes again
To those that scarce for tears could see:
"Where are all thine accusers, then?
Hath no man raised one stone at thee?"

"No man, Lord." Then, more sweet and low,
And kindlier even than before,
"Neither do I condemn thee: go
Thy way," He said, "and sin no more."

Oh, Great Physician's matchless touch!
Oh, words so simple, searching, wise!
Oh, wisdom topping man's as much
As o'er the earth the starry skies!

No dubious penitential road,
But glad, free path and open door;
No groans, no sackcloth, and no goad,
But simply: "Go, and sin no more."

She went—she passed beyond our sight,
The record breathes not even her name;
But Faith may hold that clean and white
As Kedron's stones her life became.

That she, with all tears wiped away
And heart rejoicing, purged of dross,
Wept not again until that day
When women wept about the cross.

St. Knighton's Keive.

They tell a tale in the West Countree,
A strange, strange tale I trow;
It is of Sainte Morwenna—she
Who dwelt at Morwenstow.

This is the tale the people tell:
Sainte Morwenna wore a silver bell,
Bound with a ribbon round her throat;
And the sound of its soft, rich, tinkling note
Was known and loved by every ear
In the whole West Countree, far and near.

Sainte Morwenna, she went one day
To seek what sooth her friend would say—
Her friend, Saint Knighton of the Keive,
Who could wise counsel always give.
She wore about her throat the bell—
So the West Countree people tell.

This is the tale the people tell:
Two ruffians coveted her bell;
And as she tripped along they hid
The bracken and the gorse amid.
When to the Keive the sweet Sainte came,
She paused to whisper the Holy Name.

The ruffians sprang from ambuscade.
To seize the bell the first essayed;
But the bridge of rock was narrow and high,
And he slipped with a curse and a fearful cry,
And down to the awful depths he fell—
So the West Countree people tell.

This is the tale the people tell:
The other ruffian seized the bell,
But the slender ribbon broke, and so
The bell fell into the stream below;
And the ruffian turned in mortal dread
Of Saint Knighton's curse, and wildly fled.

There buried it lies to this very day,
And who listens in faith at midnight may
Hear a soft song in the waves below
Strangely and sweetly come and go.

It is the song of the Sainte's blest bell—
So the West Countree people tell.

This is the tale of the West Countree,
A strange, strange tale I trow;
God rest the bones of Morwenna—she
Who dwelt in Morwenstow.

Glimpses of Truth.

A raindrop on a flower fell
  That braved the summer sun ;
It passed and left no trace to tell
  The good that it had done.

But stronger stood the tender bloom
  That day, sun-scorched, wind-driven ;
And sweeter yearned the faint perfume
  From heart wide-spread to heaven.

So blessèd thoughts from some dim height
  Fall on the soul like rain,
Then pass with even as subtle flight ;—
  But was the visit vain ?

What though truth still eludes desire ;
  These glimpses, rarely given,
Make strong our hearts for storm and fire
  And ope our souls for heaven.

The Prince of Roseland.

One day the Prince of Roseland
  Was weary with things of state,
For the great gray hall was dark'ning
  And the eve was waxing late.

And all day long the suitors
  Had made the palace rife
With jestings and noisy boastings,
  And flatteries and strife.

So when the sun was sinking,
  And high through the windows red
His rays were striking dimly
  On the rafters overhead,

The Prince said, "Call the pipers,
And let them pipe an air
That shall banish the strife of a prince's life
And soothe his heart of care!"

Then the pages set the candles
One after one ablaze,
Till they drowned the sorrowful twilight
With the flood of their liquid rays.

And in there came the pipers,
Pipers bent and gray,
Who had dwelt in that ancient palace
Many and many a day.

And down in the throne's dim shadow
They sat and piped an air
To banish the strife of the Prince's life,
And soothe his heart of care.

That strain he had loved of olden,
And deemed it sweet and glad,
Yet now it bore a meaning
Tearful and strange and sad,

That marred the blithesome ballad
The little pages sung,
And filled his heart with sorrow
Too deep for mortal tongue.

And when the pipers, ceasing,
Looked up to catch a bow,
They saw the quick tears falling
Through the hands that crossed his brow.

And they wondered to see him weeping,
And waited with lifted eye,
But instead of a word of praise they heard
Only a weary sigh.

We are princes of Roseland,
Each of us, one and all ;
We reign in a realm of roses,
And rule in a golden hall ;

And the pipers play full gaily
To soothe our hearts of care,
And the rafters ring as the pages sing
Many a glad, sweet air.

But, alas! some sorrowful sundown
We start to find the strain
Has lost the rhyme of the olden time,
Has gathered a note of pain;

And we weep to know the glory,
That filled life's song of yore,
Is fled as the breath of roses
And can thrill our hearts no more.

Here 'mid the faded petals
Of a land grown old with flowers,
Here in our songless palace
We sit and count the hours

Till the strange, still night be broken,
And we hear the old, glad strain
With ears undinned by sorrow
And spirits purged of pain.

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